

## **NORFOLK DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS – INFORMATION**

To ensure that a development, redevelopment or rehabilitation project obtains all the necessary city approvals, please read the following to determine if a project requires design review approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Whether your project requires approval from the **Design Review Committee** and **Planning Commission** is contingent on several factors. Chapter 9 of Norfolk's Zoning Ordinance defines the responsibilities, criteria, need for a certificate of appropriateness and application process for design review. City Code Section 32-70 also lists requirements for projects seeking design review approval.

Briefly, a project requires design review under the following circumstances:

- if a structure, project or site is located in one of the city's four local ordinance historic districts (Downtown, Ghent, East and West Freemason);
- if the project is city property, is located on city property, encroaches on or is in the right-of-way or involves a street closure; and
- if the project is on land purchased from the city or the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

When a project requires design review, it must obtain approval in a two-step process: 1) from the **Design Review Committee**; 2) from the **Planning Commission**. The Commission serves as the architectural review board and their action is the final step for project review. The Committee is advisory to the Commission.

The time frame for the design review process is dependent on the project's size and scale. Some projects obtain approval in one session with the two entities. Usually, this is for projects that are small in scope, such as the installation of storm windows, a fence or landscape improvements. However, if a project request is for new construction, it is suggested that the applicant seek **preliminary review** approval, followed by another appearance for **final review** approval. *Preliminary review* requires a rendering of the project's façade, elevations and site improvements. *Final review* requires a more detailed presentation and must have the following items to secure approval:

- 10 copies of 8½" x 11" plans;
- scaled elevations (preferably ¼" scale) of all facades (**NOTE: it is helpful if the elevations include measurements, materials, etc. for an easy interpretation of the project**);
- architectural details (such as sections, profiles, etc.);
- landscape and site plans; and
- sample board of construction materials, colors and other needed details.

Occasionally, if a project is large in scope or entails a long-range, phased development, it is recommended that the project be brought for "**Discussion Only**" followed by the preliminary and final review approvals. The purpose of the "Discussion Only" is that it serves as an introduction of the proposed, conceptual project, with no action. This step is helpful to the applicant in terms of getting ideas from the members and ensuring that the project is headed in the right direction; this avenue works best if the project is in the design phase, which allows for more flexibility. If unsure as to whether the project is helped by the "Discussion Only" presentation, please contact staff.

Information required for project review varies depending on the nature of the project. The checklist outlines the specific materials required for review. All required documentation must be submitted to staff **PRIOR** to scheduling the project before the Committee. The construction sample board may be presented on the meeting day.

NOTE: Prior to a final review, it is recommended that plans be reviewed with the Zoning Administrator and the Division of New Construction for compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and Building Code.

**All projects** require the following submittals:

- 10 copies of 8½" x 11" plans;
- 3 copies of 24" x 36" plans (for large construction projects);
- letter of request;
- completed application;
- detailed project description if the application does not offer sufficient space;
- property survey; and
- site or landscape plans (if necessary).

NOTE: Elevation and plans must be scaled drawings, with the scale noted. Electronic copies of projects are accepted in some instances.

All drawings and information must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date, which is **10 days** prior to the regularly scheduled Committee meeting. See the attached schedule for specific meeting dates and deadlines.

The deadline for the submittal of the application packet is to allow preparation of a "Staff Report and Recommendation" and to provide the Committee with project information and details prior to the meeting. Action on an application has the following possibilities: approved as presented; approved with conditions; continued until a future date; or denied.

The Committee and Commission meet twice a month. A meeting schedule is available on-line, at the department's office and with the application. Usually, the Committee meets on Mondays at 4:00 p.m. in the conference room on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of the City Hall building; the Commission meets three days later, on Thursdays, at 1:00 p.m. in the same location. Meeting changes do occur with city-designated holidays.

The applicant **MUST** attend the **Committee meeting** to present the project request. If the applicant, agent or owner cannot present a request, it is removed from the agenda. The applicant is **not required to be present at the Thursday Commission meetings**. **However, it is recommended** for applicants to attend this meeting, especially to present complex projects. Staff can answer questions about attending the Commission meeting.

The applicant is notified, via fax, of the Committee's agenda a few days prior to the meeting date. There is no formal notification to adjacent property owners or of the Commission meetings. All material/color samples and presentation boards must be picked up within two weeks of the meeting; if not picked up materials will be discarded.

If there are questions or you need clarification, please call 664.4364 or write to the following email address: [anne.guthrie@norfolk.gov](mailto:anne.guthrie@norfolk.gov)